

ACT I

Scene I

AT RISE: It is the spring of 1978, night. The place is a small promenade on the entrance to Central Park in New York City well known as cruising ground for gay men. The promenade and park are divided by a stonewall that stretches across most of upstage area. Downstage, a street light glows. CURTIS sits on a park bench center stage relaxed, panning the street scene. He wears blue jeans, T-shirt, sneakers. He smokes a cigarette and languidly follows the path of automobile lights that occasionally flash across the stage. He rises and crosses to the wall upstage and surveys the heavily foliated area, turns, crosses back to the bench, sits, extinguishes his cigarette, lights another and inhales deeply.

PRESTON, a well-dressed white male in his early thirties, enters downstage left. PRESTON moves in a pensive manner; he steals a glance at CURTIS and when the two make eye contact, they look away. PRESTON slowly meanders to the park bench where CURTIS is sitting.

PRESTON

May I sit down?

(CURTIS ignores him. PRESTON sits, clinging nervously to his briefcase and adjusting his glasses. CURTIS blows smoke rings. There's a long awkward pause.)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Nice night.

CURTIS

What?

PRESTON

I said it's a nice night, don't you think?

(CURTIS turns to face PRESTON for the first time.)

CURTIS

Listen friend, I don't have the time. I'm not interested in astrology. I do come here often. We have not met in this life or in any other one. And yes! You are disturbing me.

(CURTIS flick. one cigarette away and lights another.)

PRESTON

You know, you really should try to quit.

CURTIS

You know, you should really try to mind yo' own damn business

PRESTON

Those things are extremely detrimental to your health.

(CURTIS pulls out a pack of cigarettes.)

CURTIS

I know. It's written right here on the package, isn't it? Warning. Warning. Smoking causes cancer, strokes, painful tumors and bad breath. Smoking kills!

(CURTIS takes a deep drag and exhales.)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Death never tasted so good.

PRESTON

Did you know that cigarette smoking is directly linked to the leading cause of death in the United States, stroke?

CURTIS

My God, what are you a walking billboard?

PRESTON

Men and women in the study who smoked for more than ten years...

CURTIS

Do you mind...dead man smoking here.

PRESTON

Cigarette smoking is estimated to account for 30 to 40 percent of bladder cancer. The mortality rate for pancreatic cancer was two out of three, and then there's stomach cancer, coronary heart disease, cervical cancer, endometrical cancer. It's an expensive, dirty and deadly habit.

CURTIS

Why excuse me, Mister Surgeon General. Did you know you have a better chance of dying from violent means than by smoking? New York has one of the highest homicide rates in the nation. 42 percent are crimes of passion. 16 percent are committed in the act of perpetrating a crime, 19 percent are gang related, and 22 percent die at the hands of ANGRY YOUNG BLACK MEN!

PRESTON

I don't mean to contradict you...

CURTIS

Well, don't! Don't contradict me, okay. Let's just sit here with a pregnant pause between us.

(Long pause)

PRESTON

If I'm not mistaken, Washington D.C. has the highest murder rate per capita in the country.

CURTIS

For God's sake.

PRESTON

Nationwide, most homicides are domestically motivated, and white males commit the majority.

CURTIS

Will you shut the fuck up? Jesus, you ever hear of reflective silence.

(PRESTON abruptly extends his hand to introduce himself. CURTIS reacts by adopting a martial arts defensive position.)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

By the way, my name is Preston.

(PRESTON continues to hold his hand extended. CURTIS remains frozen in a defensive position.)

CURTIS

You know...you know, you could get yo' ass kicked for that.

PRESTON

For what?

CURTIS

For this.

(CURTIS imitates PRESTON'S
gesture.)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's not the kind of signal you want to give an angry
young black man.

(PRESTON chuckles)

CURTIS

What's so funny?

PRESTON

You're not an angry young black man.

CURTIS

Yeah.

PRESTON

Yeah, must be in your thirties.

CURTIS

I'm twenty-eight, asshole. Listen, friend. Let me put it to you
plain and simple, you're not my type, okay? Nothing personal.
I'm just not into yuppies, guppies, buppies, fashion fags, Wall
Street money pimps, Eastside closet queens, academic voyeurs, or
the Greenwich Village, "Let's do brunch bunch."

PRESTON

I was just trying to...

CURTIS

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know. Just trying to make conversation,
while away the idle hours etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. If you
haven't surmised by now, I'm out here for a little more than
fresh air. You know what I mean. Just want to get you straight
right off the bat, so you don't waste my time...well, each
other's time.

PRESTON

You want me to leave?

CURTIS

It's up to you.

PRESTON

Well, I just thought...

CURTIS

You just thought what?

PRESTON

I don't know. That maybe...

CURTIS
(Softly)

You'd get some black dick.

PRESTON

Excuse me?

CURTIS
Oh, you heard me. You know I get so sick of your type talking out of both sides of your mouth. Excuse me, I'm really heterosexual, straight as an arrow, but I see you got a nice piece of meat I'd like to wrap my lips around.

PRESTON
You flatter yourself, mister. If I was looking for something along those lines, which I'm not, I think I choose a grade "A" select cut rather than picked over scraps.

CURTIS
My, my, my. Don't we have an acid tongue?

PRESTON
I was just trying to-- You could have just come out and said you'd rather be alone.

CURTIS
Oh, no! I don't want to be alone. You know, I like having you here scaring away all the hot prospects. (Sarcastic) Shoo! Get away from me, you big handsome, hunk of a man. Go on now, you...you Adonis you. Be gone drop-dead-gorgeous man, you have no power here. I'm conversing with this most erudite, chock full of information stranger.

PRESTON
There's no need to get sarcastic.

CURTIS
Me sarcastic?

PRESTON
Yes, and hostile! With chip on shoulder as big you imagine your cock to be. You're probably suffering from an acute case of penis envy. (Beat) You know, someone is going knock that chip right off one of these days.

CURTIS
Certainly ain't gonna be yo' skinny white ass.

PRESTON
I wouldn't lower myself to your gutter level.

CURTIS

Yeah?

PRESTON

Yeah.

CURTIS

So, you think I'm hostile?

PRESTON

Yes...yes I do, and you reek of sarcasm.

CURTIS

Hostile and reeking of sarcasm? Where I come from, there is fighting words, mister. But I'm not a belligerent type, you see, I'm a simple man with simple aspirations. You see, I got these dreams bursting inside me.

CURTIS looks at PRESTON for some response.)

PRESTON

Like what? What do you dream of?

CURTIS

I dream...I dream of being a contestant on *The Dating Game*!

(CURTIS rises and moves downstage.)

CURTIS

(In the persona of a slick game show host)

Welcome to the Dating Game, the show that brings eligible bachelors together with another eligible bachelor, for an all expense paid weekend with the bachelor of your choice and maybe a chance at love. You all know the rules, so let's get started by introducing our contestant. Today, hailing from New York City lets all welcome, Curtis.

(CURTIS behaves like a ditsy contestant.)

Thank you, thank you. Hello Alex. I'm so excited to be here.

(As the game show host)

Curtis, I have it here that you once wrestled an eight-foot boa constrictor.

(As the contestant)

That's right! It was enormous. After an hour of working with that thing, I showed it who the boss was.

(As the game show host)

Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself?

(As a contestant)

I was born and raised in the cornfields of Des Moines, Iowa. I'm basically a small town sort of guy.

PRESTON

This is ridiculous.

CURTIS

I moved to New York City at the age of nineteen, to pursue a life of sex, sin and men. I have a strong interest in movies, sports, politics, and men. I love traveling to strange and erotic places-- Oooops, I meant exotic I get the two confused sometimes, they're so close together, you know.

PRESTON

I'm perfectly willing to...

CURTIS

Cooking, I love to cook...Julia Childs, I love you. Sewing, wild animal safaris, and men. (*Feigning embarrassment*) I've already mentioned men, haven't I? All kinds of men. I love men, lots and lots of men, at least seven to ten a week, with well-toned bodies, rippling muscles, big arms, defined chest, washboard abs, strong tree trunk thighs, bubble butts, pearly whites and big, health baskets full of scrumptious goodies. Yum, come and get it! Personality is optional, the strong silent type preferred, and enthusiasm is essential. I love sucking cock, big, uncut ones, if available, but any will do. There is nothing more titillating than a mouth full of warm, creamy, delectable cum. I love fucking and getting fucked. To me, the best things in life are over eight inches and throbbing. I'm also active in the, "Save the Sperm Whales" campaign.

PRESTON

(*Applauding*) Bravo! Bravo! Do you perform the same soliloquy for every unsuspecting soul that happens by? Well, if you wanted to shock me with your adroit use of vulgarity, it didn't work. I ride the number four train during rush hour. Nothing shocks me. I think it's about time for me to leave.

(PRESTON stands and begins to leave. CURTIS grabs hold of PRESTON'S arm.)

CURTIS

What's your hurry?

PRESTON

Will you please remove your...

CURTIS

Stay with me!

(CURTIS falls to his knees pleading with PRESTON.)

PRESTON

What do you think...?

CURTIS
You just can't use me, abuse me, and throw me out like a worn out tampon.

PRESTON
Get up...Get up off your knees!

CURTIS
Please, please don't leave me.

PRESTON
Come on, will you....

CURTIS
I can't live without you.

PRESTON
Let go of my hand!

CURTIS
Haven't I been faithful? Haven't I been true?

(PRESTON yanks his hand away.
CURTIS grabs hold of his jacket.)

PRESTON
Let go of my suit! I would be my luck to run into a schizo.

CURTIS
Didn't I give you the best years of my life?

PRESTON
Come on. Let go of me!

CURTIS
Cooking. Cleaning.

PRESTON
Come on, let...

CURTIS
...darning your filthy socks...

PRESTON
If you don't release me...

CURTIS
And, this is my reward, desertion.

(A few people enter left and watch the exchange.)

PRESTON

You need help, mister. *(Notices the group that has gathered)*
Hey, you're creating a scene.

CURTIS

Let them look. Let them talk.

*(CURTIS addresses the group
downstage.)*

CURTIS

He beats me! I'm strong, I don't cry out. Uses my body for his
sick, sadistic fantasy and locks me in the closet for the night.

PRESTON

You've taken this absurd caricature far enough.

CURTIS

I want the whole world to know what kind of a man you are.

PRESTON

You don't even know me.

CURTIS

Oh, but I know you too well.

*(PRESTON speaks to people
downstage.)*

PRESTON

I don't know him. Never seen him before tonight.

CURTIS

Selfish...cruel and heartless. *(To the couple downstage.)* He's a
beast!

*(Pointing to Curtis and speaking to
the people downstage)*

PRESTON

He's one of those people on early release program from the state
mental hospital. This is the result of budget cuts. I'm just
doing my civic duty, helping a poor, demented soul.

CURTIS

Dejected, forced to fend for-

PRESTON

Will you get a hold of yourself?

CURTIS

Did you ever stop and think about Tiberius?

PRESTON
Tiberius? Who in the hell is Tiberius?

(CURTIS breaks into a dramatic lament, pounding his chest and wringing his hands. The people downstage, fearing involvement, rushes off stage left.)

CURTIS
Who's Tiberius!? You have the gall to act like you never heard that name?

PRESTON
Yeah, I've heard the name, Emperor of Rome 14 AD to 37 AD, but somehow I don't think...

CURTIS
Then you don't deny that you're his father?

(CURTIS looks to PRESTON for an answer. PRESTON looks confused and annoyed.)

PRESTON
What?

CURTIS
After insisting on giving him that oh so grandiose name, Tiberius, you act like you've never heard of our little bundle of joy. I call him Ty for short, little baby Ty. I don't know how I'm going to afford the specialist for his...

PRESTON
Specialist?

CURTIS
Yes, I never told you but...but he's dying of chronic lycanthropy.

PRESTON
Hold it. Hold it! Doesn't lycanthropy have something to do with werewolves?

CURTIS
Yes! Yes! Yes! Oh, God, dear God. It's either the medicine to control it or a silver bullet to end his life.

PRESTON
Okay! Okay! You win I'll stay. Just...just get a hold of yourself.

(CURTIS releases his hold on PRESTON and they stand staring at each other for a moment. CURTIS motions for PRESTON to sit down. PRESTON crosses and sits.)

PRESTON (CONT'D)

What was that all about?

CURTIS

What was what about?

PRESTON

You know perfectly well what I'm talking about. And my god, Tiberius?

CURTIS

Nice touch, don't you think?

PRESTON

Lycanthropy.

CURTIS

By the light of the full moon, he will become one with the beast.

PRESTON

I think I made a big mistake sitting down here.

CURTIS

Come on, things were just beginning to get interesting.

PRESTON

Bizarre.

CURTIS

You must be new on the scene.

PRESTON

What?

CURTIS

The scene. The game.

PRESTON

I'm having a bit of problem keeping up with your incoherent outburst.

CURTIS

The scene--the game--a little nookie for my cookie.

PRESTON

What in the...?

CURTIS

What? What? What? You sound like a mentally challenged parrot.

PRESTON

I don't think it's been established that I'm gay.

CURTIS

You're as obvious as a gay goose stuffed with sausage...dressing.

PRESTON

Interesting metaphor.

CURTIS

Well?

PRESTON

Well, what?

CURTIS

Pay attention, man. This is a fast paced evening. Are you or have you ever been a homosexual?

PRESTON

I thought you had already determined.

CURTIS

I want to hear it from you.

PRESTON

I don't know.

CURTIS

You don't know.

PRESTON

Yeah, I'm confused, conflicted, ambivalent...

CURTIS

Another dizzy, closet case.

PRESTON

This is very difficult for me. You see I'm...I'm.

CURTIS

You're what?

PRESTON

I come here sometimes to find a piece of a puzzle. Something that will make everything align. I have these impulses I can't control. I don't know whether to act on them or suppress them.

CURTIS

(Half singing a series of popular songs of the day.)

It ain't that hard, man. Push, push in the bush. Pull up to my bumper baby and drive it in between. Dancing in the sheets.

PRESTON

Okay, I get your point.

CURTIS

You got to bury that pole in the donkey.

PRESTON

I said, I get your point. Will you please...?

CURTIS

You want to do the wild thing!

(Singing)

WILD THING

YOU MAKE MY HEART SING.

YOU MAKE EVERYTHING SING.

YOU WILD THING, ETC.

PRESTON

Hey, hey, hey come on, I don't need this.

CURTIS

Believe me you're not the only one that has trouble relating to men. *(Beat)* You're not one of those fools who have been saving it up for a rainy day or the perfect scank?

PRESTON

I don't think that is...

CURTIS

Say it ain't so, mammy. My Horatio gonna to be comin' back from the war with all his-- *(Gesturing to his gentiles)* you know, his manhood in order.

PRESTON

I'm not a virgin!

CURTIS

Nothing to be ashamed of. We were all virgins once. I even know people that have recurring episodes.

PRESTON

Why should I lie!? I barely know you.

CURTIS

Oooo, me thinks, he protests too much.